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A LITERARY NEWSPAPER

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EDITORIAL

People who are young enough nowadays not to have participated in the horrors of the feminist movement are spared an acute realization of the stupidity of the intelligent woman. Owing to the ravages of education and of feminist progress in the years before the war we found ourselves confronted with countless samples of the species who were almost as, if not more, stupid than what often pass for intelligent men. This was the result of the shortsightedness which lay back of the theory of the equality of the sexes. The sexes, in the divine plan of nature, are not equal, not even in their stupidities, and a woman displaying masculine stupidity is as obscene a spectacle as a female pugilist in an encounter with Max Schmeling.

The most obvious earmark of the stupidly intelligent woman is her desire to share in the activities of stupid men, such as registering in order to vote for Tweedledee, running for office, or indulging in the kind of conversation which the average male inflicts upon his companions at a golf club. Sad, indeed, is the fate of a man who, having put up all day with the platitudes of his kind, finds himself seated at dinner beside an intelligent woman who immediately proceeds to repeat whatever the last man she was talking to said. Instead of the surcease from current blather, which one expects from an attractive woman, he is solemnly assured that Senator Wallawalla is, in some mysterious manner, distinguishable from Senator Bushwah, or that the book-of-the-month is an incredible masterpiece, or that something or other is going to happen to the market, or that D. H. Lawrence has been greatly misunderstood.

The effect of this upon sensitive males has been such that Mlle. Loos, that eminent research-worker, wrote a *chef d'œuvre* about the women men prefer. How often have we observed, in the course of our editorial gyrations in literary society, the spectacle of eminent literati fleeing in horror from female Ph.D's in order to admire the proficiency of some sweet young girdleless thing in a soft, kicky skirt. Oscar Wilde once observed that alcohol, if taken in sufficient quantities, produces all the symptoms of intoxication. On the same principle we have observed that education, if absorbed in sufficient doses, will produce in women all the symptoms of intelligence. But we still suspect that the best equipment for an intelligent woman is a full-length mirror in her bathroom and a smaller one in her vanity case. A bottle of Chanel's and a Guerlain lipstick are of greater help in a woman's hour of need than a parchment presented by some learned spinster certifying her incomparable knowledge of Middle English.

The road to Smith or Vassar is paved with good intentions, the intentions of misguided young women to become carbon copies of men. Whenever it has been our privilege to address the students at these and similar seminaries, we have always asked them why they had decided to waste those years of their lives under the tutelage of dessicated old maids, who could not possibly equip them for the rôle for which Jehovah, in His infinite wisdom, had intended them. Only those least favored by nature had any plausible excuse for being there. The others confessed candidly that college was an escape from home, an opportunity for making social and sentimental contacts, but hardly a place in which an attractive girl could hope to acquire any talents of practical use to her.

It is a moot question whether a college education is of any genuine educational service to the average man in this country, since the overwhelming majority do not contemplate any career other than that of profit-making. As the success stories indicate, the great fortunes of America were not built up by devotees of the midnight oil. Where women are concerned, the superfluousness of the Higher Learning is even more obvious. Young men, at least, can be bemused by the thought that intellect has made men immortal, but girls are only too well aware that the women who have inspired poetry, overthrown kings and empires, and made their names in history, were never distinguished either for learning or virtue. If they are remembered it is because they did in their lifetime the one thing which an intelligent woman can and does do (when uncontaminated by male stupidity), to wit, supply in life that element which no man, however brilliant, can supply. They contributed the element of femininity, without which the world would be as dull as the Garden of Eden was before the Serpent instructed Eve as to her true rôle.

There is something to be said for the news-reel. When our politicians face the camera and microphone, not only does one hear their meaningless words, but one also sees their faces. An individual studying a politician in a movie theatre is more critical than he would be as one of a mob cheering a vote-cadger. It is true that film political speeches delay the presentation of Mickey Mouse. But we can afford to wait.

THE SUPREME COURT MENACE

by R. S. ALLEN

If the government of the United States is overthrown by violence at any future time the responsibility will belong to the Supreme Court of the United States. This remote, austere body is as ally of radicalism as literally as the fanatical dry has been the ally of the bootlegger. It is the stumbling block in the way of all attempts to make this government adaptable to a changing world and responsive to changing social conceptions; and an insuperable obstacle to peaceful progress toward a saner and more stable order of things.

During the past three years it has become obvious that sweeping economic changes must take place, if this country is to avoid the tumultuous upsets inevitable when part of the people become too rich and most of the people become too poor. Legislatures have been fumbling with the problem, not unintelligently, and even Congress has shown a willingness to do so. These bodies have been discussing economic planning, government control of productive investments, drastic taxation of wealth, government operation of basic industries, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and other measures calling for revision of our attitude toward property. But legislators, economists, and intelligent business men who see the abyss yawning in front of them and attempt to save themselves and the existing order by compromises and palliatives find the Supreme Court, blind and insensate, blocking the way.

This being so, those who are seeking a way out for the United States are forced to consider, not whether proposed changes are wise, not whether they have a reasonable chance of accomplishing the ends sought, but only whether they will pass muster with those venerable patriarchs, the members of the Supreme Court of the United States. If it seems probable that five of the nine aged men who rule over the country from the remote detachment of appointive life jobs will find contemplated experiments obnoxious, there is little left except to drop the idea of action sweeping enough to accomplish anything important.

The net result is a government in the United States less flexible than that of almost any other country in the world. No other government with pretensions toward democracy subordinates its elective officers to an appointive judiciary. In the United States, after the fanfare of electing public servants to perform the popular will, after legislative battle to express this will in statutes, then finally the Supreme Court decides what may be done and what may not. There is no appeal from its decision, and obviously there is no chance that changes may be made quickly enough to meet the fast-moving crises of modern economic life.

There are several ways in which the Supreme Court might be forced to abdicate its rôle as arbiter of government, though the processes would be tedious.

The entire federal court system might be abolished or starved to death by failure to appropriate funds for it, but even though the federal court system was created by Congress under the broad generalities of the Constitution, only an outburst of public sentiment equivalent almost to revolution is likely to bring about its destruction. Two other possibilities remain. Congress and the states might, by constitutional amendment, expressly forbid the Supreme Court to pass upon the constitutionality of either state or federal laws; or they might similarly give Congress power to re-enact measures over the judicial veto.

These ideas are not new ones. They have been considered from time to time for some twenty years. But strangely enough, in spite of this fact, the impression still prevails that such action would constitute tampering with the holy and inspired will of the founding fathers.

The reverse is true. The Constitution does not

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A GUESS AT GEORGE ADE

by BOOTH TARKINGTON

We're beholden to John Aubrey for telling us that Shakespeare and Ben Jonson did gather the humors of men daily. In fact, I think there's an intimation of Aubrey's that warrants our imagining Shakespeare in the act of seeking out humors as other natural-born humorists have sought them. We'll be well on the great unknown's track if we see him dropping into a certain saloon less because he wanted a drink than for the reason that the bartender's ideas interested him, and it's virtually certain that he frequented a particular tavern because it had a bell-boy whose talk gave him a rich inner pleasure. Shakespeare had no contemporaneous "literary reputation"; Oxford didn't remotely consider calling him up for an honorary degree, and nobody dreamed of haunting him with a notebook and an eye upon subsequent biography. We may take Aubrey's little clue as candlelight, however, and, even in so faint and brief an illumination, see the man—see him solemnly filling his ear with delight in the talk of a tapster and anxiously charging his memory with a record of every uttered syllable.

In this habit of his I think he must be seen as the best kind of humorist and better than a satirist; for, making bold, I venture the suggestion that only the lower risibilities are stimulated to view as ludicrous the accidents, embarrassments and minor agonies to which human beings and animals are subject, while satire appears to be the disgusted or enraged observation of the incongruities and peculiarities of human character and behavior. The best humor, on the contrary, finds little pleasure in any pain at all and seems to be a delighted observation of incongruities and peculiarities. Thus a satirist would seem to say, "See this fellow, how ridiculous he is! He ought to be shot!" The larger artists, Shakespeare and George Ade and W. W. Jacobs, appear to maintain the contrary. "See this fellow, how priceless he is! Pray heaven he be left untouched!"

In risking this association of names I am not forgetful of Falstaff's basket, but that was "theatre." My purpose is to suggest that Shakespeare practised his ear upon the speech of hostlers, bumpkins and tavern gossips, and that Ade hung about "Doc Horne" and "Pink Marsh" for the same reason. Neither Shakespeare nor Ade brought out of these contacts what his contemporaneous reviewers called "serious books, or "serious drama," for the word "serious" apparently means some sort of compilation extracted from previous writings and made perishable by its own turgidity. No, Shakespeare and Ade, being really serious artists, had delight in studying from the life, then they carefully painted from the life; they got their people from people, not from books. The thought hereupon arriving in the mind of any perspective reader is that, if Shakespeare could discover "Pink Marsh" and "Doc Horne" and "Artie" through Ade, he would fill with a congratulatory appreciation and happy gratitude. Could these two meet, the Elizabethan and the Hoosier, the formal preliminaries to acquaintanceship would be brief; with infinite jest they'd swap story for story all night long.

"Serious reviewers" have regretted that the fables of George Ade should have been written in ephemeral vernacular; but I think it probable that these writings will be preserved not only for the historical value of that very vernacular but for the life and wisdom (by which I of course mean the humor) that is in them. As fables should, they penetrate to inner meanings of a great many human manifestations; yet, oddly, one subject of which they frequently treat might well be thought to have no place among them because of the author's inexperience in dealing with it personally. Nevertheless, it is a subject upon which he habitually speaks as one having authority, and here, I think, he not only falls into common error himself but lures his reader to take the drop with him.

I find myself inquiring if any of our errors is more common than our acceptance of authorities who have no experience of their subjects. Common sense wouldn't encourage a farmer to plant his farm according to the advice of a man who had never planted anything. Yet, in his fables and elsewhere, we find George Ade, most sensible of men, speaking volubly upon the subject of marriage, but proving himself a fabulist indeed; for here he can have no more than the outsider's view and has never paid this topic the compliment of even a cursory personal investigation.

The first great upholder of literary realism in our country, Howells, approvingly found Ade to be a forefront realist; but his realism stops with his writing, and now we sniff a dusty odor and guess the presence of a skeleton locked within a closet. For a further guess the name of this skeleton is romance. Not misogyny but romance accounts for Ade's lack of authority when he speaks of marriage and for his bachelorhod. He is so keen a shy romantic that he has always feared familiarity with the subject upon which he is fallible; his manner of life is the result of his long, poetic fear of changing romance to realism.

A celestial irony created this man who could charm the nightingale to song and the guinea-hen to silence, and then put into him a terror of ever being not alone, except for hurried moments in vapory moonlight. In this there may be some loss to readers in general; but there is certainly an incomparable particular one to an unknown lady somewhere who is luckily unaware of her misfortune to have missed becoming the wisest and best entertained woman in the world.

IN PRAISE OF ESCAPE

by HENRY HAZLITT

No belief can enter the popular mind without becoming, by the time it gets there, a caricature of itself. It would be interesting if some scholar were to trace this process in, for example, the theories of Jung and Freud. He might begin, let us say, with the first time that the words "escape" and "escape mechanism" appeared in psychoanalytical writing to describe definitely pathological conditions; he might then follow their wider and wider application until they were used as mere terms of contempt and derision to the behavior of persons formerly regarded as quite normal. In the course of his researches our scholar would move out of the field of strict psychology into that of literary criticism, where he would find increasingly numerous uses of the terms to describe all fantasies and romances, or even realistic novels in so far as they failed to deal with the most objectionable aspects of reality. He would find them, finally, applied to novels that were not set in our own time and among the most miserable elements of our population. Any novel is an escape novel, he would find some of the new "Marxist" critics implying, that was not centered about a labor strike.

To wish to escape is thought to be a shameful and cowardly thing, and under the pressure of quasi-psychoanalytical abuse few of us are willing to admit even to ourselves that we nurse such a wish. Hence some of us may even force ourselves to do various obnoxious tasks for no better reason than that they are obnoxious, and certainly many of us have been shamed out of a few harmless and pleasant diversions through the same fear.

Yet nearly all of us, whether we admit it to ourselves or not, are constantly effecting escapes from "reality." What is more, such escapes are necessary for our moral health and sanity. Even Karl Marx, who did more than any other man of the nineteenth century to fasten attention on the rotten foundations of bourgeois society and the indecencies of industrialism, found himself compelled to turn his eyes and nose away from time to time. He not only counted among his favorite writers such shameless romancers as Charles Lever, Paul de Kock, Sir Walter Scott and the elder Dumas, but he was a devotee of those still more obvious modes of escape, checkers and chess. His son-in-law tells us that he even turned to algebra for moral consolation, and "would take refuge in it during the most painful moments of a storm-tossed life."

True, Marx was by his own confession a bookworm, but we find no great change when we turn to a man of action like Lenin. He too found it necessary from time to time to escape, and he too chose at times to bury himself in the unreal world of chess. His widow tells us that he would read chess manuals and sit for hours working out chess problems; indeed, he became so deeply immersed in this form of escape that it became itself something it was necessary to escape from, for he began to cry out in his sleep such things as "If he puts his knight here, I'll stick my rook there."

These illustrious men effected an escape from what they considered to be their life work. But what of men, certainly no less illustrious, who acknowledge their life work to be itself an escape? This is the confession of the man who is generally conceded to be the greatest scientist of our time. "As to artistic and scientific creation," writes Albert Einstein, "I hold with Schopenhauer that their strongest motive is the desire to leave behind the rawness and monotony of everyday life, so as to take refuge in a world crowded with the images of our own creation."

Perhaps it is time that we began to talk less nonsense about "escape" and to look at the problem realistically. We deny that we wish to escape because we do not wish to be thought cowardly; but this only means that we have become too cowardly even to acknowledge our desire to escape. The man who finds himself in a pig-sty not only wishes to escape but ought to if he has any self-respect. He may sometimes consider it to be his unpleasant duty to clean out the pig-sty, but even so, he is entitled to periods of prolonged withdrawal, if only to retain his sense of smell. Escape is never to be condemned *per se*. Everything depends upon what *kind* of escape is being made, on what you are escaping *from* and what you are escaping *to*. Perhaps something depends, too, upon whether escape is temporary and occasional or permanent and habitual, and upon whether the escapist himself recognizes that he has made an escape. But let us not condemn his escape without asking whether the unreal world he has temporarily retired to is not better than the real world from which he is taking a vacation.

BABBITT: 1932 MODEL

by W. E. WOODWARD

The latest researches in American anthropology reveal the startling fact that the old style Babbitts have practically disappeared, and, unless some steps are taken to preserve them, the entire race must soon be classified among the lost fauna of the continent. Small herds may still be seen in certain sections, but they are too shy to be studied at close range. Yet the most cursory observation at a distance shows that they have greatly diminished in number.

Most of the formerly well-known cheer-leaders are no longer visible. Charles M. Schwab cannot be found, nor Bruce Barton. They are probably dead. A vigorous search should be made for their skeletons, as such splendid specimens of the old style Babbitt ought to be preserved in some form for the instruction of posterity.

Calvin Coolidge is still alive, however, and was recently seen, towering above the herd. According to well-informed authorities, he is the best example of old style Babbittry now extant. In the interest of science he should be looked after, and provided with adequate food and shelter; and certainly he should be protected from vicious pot-hunters who would riddle him with satire, *pour le sport*.

The cause of the appalling decrease in the swarms of old style Babbitts is a matter of conjecture. Some of those who have given attention to the subject maintain that the Babbitts have been stricken by a fatal form of melancholia. There is something to be said for this theory. Back in 1924 Calvin Coolidge uttered his famous dictum: "Profits and civilization go hand in hand." No doubt he expressed a fundamental belief of the great mass of Babbitts. Now that profits have disappeared, it is entirely probable that the Babbitts of the 1932 model became convinced that civilization had also disappeared, so they simply curled up and died.

At any rate, whatever the specific cause may be, there is a general consensus of opinion that the decimation of the old style Babbitts is in some way associated with the collapse of Hooverism and the phenomenon of the empty dinner pail. It is much to be regretted, of course, for the Babbitts were amusing. They were depicted as destructive to high ideals and other tender fruits, but the picture was overdrawn, and now the best opinion is that they were really harmless.

Those who are grieved over the passing of the old style Babbitts may take comfort in the fact that Mother Nature is always fertile, and one crop of potatoes follows another. The old style Babbitts are a vanishing race, but Babbitts of the new style have appeared. They belong to the same species as their predecessors, but in form and expression they are different and may not be recognized as Babbitts at first sight.

The old style Babbitt stood flat-footed on Business and the Bible. Maybe you recall Bruce Barton's characterization of Christ as the greatest sales manager in the history of the world. The old style Babbitt could not conceive of a social system without sales managers, real estate deals, a rising stock market, shrewdness, and God as a stern executive with a flock of bookkeepers. He was a good believer. He could believe in anything that was successful. He went so far as to believe in the greatness of General Pershing.

The 1932 model Babbitt is very much the same as his forerunner, except that he appears in a different field. The speciality of the new style Babbitt is Literature and Art. He is intellectually superior to almost everybody, and he has an esoteric sense. He knows a lot that you don't know and would not understand, even if he told you.

I write of the new style Babbitts with love and affection, as some of them are my friends—and I have had an opportunity of observing them closely. I went to an art exhibition with one of them, and we stood before a painting called "Potiphar's Wife." In the background there was a palm tree, and a well with water running from it. That's all there was to the picture, save that the whole canvas from top to bottom was covered with circles and triangles.

"Good God!" exclaimed the new style Babbitt who stood by my side. "What imagery! What a storm of emotion flung on canvas!"

"But where's Potiphar?" I inquired. "And where's his wife?"

"Don't you get it?" he said with a shade of disdain. "You've read of Potiphar's wife trying to seduce Joseph?"

Yes; I'd heard of that. "But where is the attempted seduction going on?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," he replied, "does everything have to be put in A B C's for you to grasp it? There it is right before your eyes!"

I looked at the picture quite a while, and I must say that I did not see anything that even faintly

(*Continued on Page 2, Col. 1*)

THE WORST BOOK OF THE MONTH

LE SONGE DE DESCARTES. By Jacques Maritain. 4⅝ x 7⅜. Pp. xii+344. 15 frs. Paris: Editions R. A. Corrêa.

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BABBITT: 1932 MODEL

(*Continued from Page* 1, *Col.* 4)

suggested a seduction. Maybe it was going on behind the palm tree. If the picture had been labeled "Milton Dictating to His Daughters," or "Benjamin Franklin Smoking a Pipe," I fancy the new style Babbitt would have caught the same meaning at once, and would have been just as enthusiastic over it.

Among the special delights of the new Babbitts is a kind of poetry that you cannot understand—that of e. e. cummings, for example. Now, mr. cummings may be a great poet. I shall not argue about that; but I know that he is incomprehensible to anyone who hasn't a special type of comprehender. All of the new style Babbitts are equipped with super-comprehenders.

Once I ventured to say to a new model Babbitt that two-thirds of James Joyce's "Ulysses" might be cut out, and the book improved. In other words, all the pages and pages of meaningless trash could have been omitted. There was a tone of religious awe in his voice as he repelled my suggestion. "There is no trash in 'Ulysses'," he said indignantly. "*Every word* belongs *just where it is!*"

The new style Babbitt admires George Antheil's hammer and tongs musical compositions, and George Gershwin's jazz. Why? "Because they express the spirit of the age"—whatever that may be. His tendency is always to put some fictitious or artificial quality above the ever-enduring quality of excellence.

He professes to love Marcel Proust's long-drawn out sentences and cloudy style. In one of Proust's novels there is a sentence that contains two hundred and ten words—by count. You have to go back and read it over three or four times, and even then you are not sure of its meaning. It has a series of shifting predicates. I mentioned this to a new Babbitt, and asked him to interpret it for me. "This sentence has no meaning," he said, "in the ordinary sense of meaning. It is a reflection of the unconscious, so it changes its aspect like the shadows of sunset falling on water."

Yet, at the same time, the new Babbitt adores Ernest Hemingway and Thornton Wilder, whose simple little stories might be read with delight by children. I know one who has a complete set of Hemingway first editions. Yes, he has—and he keeps the precious volumes locked securely in a drawer. If he likes you, he will show them to you.

Hemingway is passing out, and in a few years he will be as dead, in a literary sense, as Michael Arlen, whose American counterpart he is. The new Babbitt is thoroughly obsessed by fashions and has a fresh fetich every year. Just now it happens to be "The Fountain," by Charles Morgan. That novel shines so brightly in his soul that the rest of the world's literature is dim and foggy by comparison. But most of the new Babbitts have not read "The Fountain." They merely keep it on the living-room table and talk about it. The new Babbitt usually has the novels of Ursula Parrott and Edgar Wallace in his bedroom, but he never mentions them; and for really serious reading he goes in for "Washington Merry-Go-Round," or the collected essays of Walter Lippmann.

Among the significant books treasured by the new Babbittry one must certainly include "Lady Chatterley's Lover." Not the expurgated edition, but the one with all the bad words in it. "It's nature in the raw," he says. The lady Babbitt also likes it a lot. To be familiar with "Lady Chatterley's Lover" is a proof that the lady Babbitt of the new style is not afraid of facts or ideas; and, of course she philosophizes about it. I think the comment of Miss Lilyan Tashman, the movie star is worthy of being preserved in marble or bronze. She read "Lady Chatterley's Lover" and said, "I do not find it erotic, but it is esoteric."

One of the outstanding characteristics of the new Babbittry is an intricate rationalization of simplicity. The eating of a ham omelette may be described in ten pages and acquire a deep meaning of its own. Contract bridge, a childish card game, which any fool may play successfully if he has a good memory, has become a science; and the humorous but rude antics of the Four Marx Brothers are profound revelations of something or other.

The new style Babbitts are snobs, just as snobbish as their predecessors. I met a lady Babbitt of the 1932 model recently. She is the president of a woman's club in a Southern city, and had just planned a lecture course for her club this winter. It was to be a literary course; all the lecturers were authors. She showed me her list of speakers. "That list," she said proudly, "has two princesses and a baroness on it. There is not another club in the South that can make as good a showing."

I looked it over. She had the princesses and the baroness, all right. "But," I said in surprise. "You haven't got the Grand Duchess Marie!"

"We're trying to get her," she replied, "and I think we'll have her before the season is over."

ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS SERIES No. 3

Osbert Sitwell, in the (London) *Week-End Review:*

"Before making any attempt to criticize his [D. H. Lawrence's] 'Collected Poems,' I must advance, without hesitation . . . my opinion that Lawrence was a greater writer of prose than of poems, nevertheless, if he had never penned a single novel or short story of genius, his poems would suffice to earn him that title."

***Lost:** In offices of The New Republic, sometime between 1913 and 1932, copy, in fair condition, of the Marquis of Queensberry Rules. Will finder please return to editorial department, 421 W. 21st St.—Advt.*

THE OLD SEA-DOG

by WILLIAM McFEE

Sometimes the question will be put in a mixed company: why boys no longer want to go to sea. Various explanations will be offered as, for example, that boys today are degenerate and prefer white collar jobs, or that they dislike sailing with so many coarse foreigners who do not understand our standards of living. It will be said that the work is too degrading and the promotion too slow for boys of real ability. And someone is almost certain to remark that the American Merchant Marine—or any other marine for that matter—is no longer what it used to be in the days of the sailing ship clippers, of the glorious period of shipping in New Bedford and Salem.

The real answer to the question is that boys do want to go to sea, and would ship at once but for two reasons. First, there are no jobs for them and, second, their parents are horrified at the meagre salaries paid to the commanders of even the largest liners. As for the old days of sail, the less said about them the better. They answered exactly to Doctor Johnson's definition of a sailor's life, that it had all the disadvantages of a jail-sentence with the added risk of being drowned.

There is, however, another aspect of the seafaring life which in the long run will operate heavily against any save ne'er-do-wells and rapscallions taking up this profession. I refer to the cloud of romantic sentiment which seems inevitably to obscure us the moment the public and the newspapermen become aware of our existence. We become the victims of a fantastic misconception which seems to date as far back as Elizabethan times at least. It was Hawkins, probably one of the most astute and intellectual of Elizabeth's admirals, who has been known until recently as "an old sea-dog." Nothing more ironical can be imagined. He was pictured for generations as a sort of shaggy monster who descended upon the helpless hordes of innocent black savages in Africa and carried them off to sell to cruel Spanish dons in America. This generic conception of sea-captains, slightly modified to suit the century, has persisted to this day. No admiral of the blue can hope to win popularity unless he can be described as "an old sea-dog." Ship-masters may writhe in impotent anguish in their cabins, but they must submit to the same silly label.

It would be easy to blame the newspapermen for this romantic rubbish, by which they keep alive the legend of a ship's captain as a red-faced moron in sou-wester and hip boots bawling from a wind-swept quarter deck, while a hard-case Down-East mate smashes fists like hams into the faces of a desperate, treacherous crew. But the newspapermen are not alone to blame. They merely feed this sort of hokum to a public which refuses year after year to swallow any other provender about the sea. The commander of a great liner may have passed for extra-master, which involved him in the higher mathematics and a severe course in astronomical physics. He may have passed for a Trinity House Pilot. He may have been through an exhaustive course in naval gunnery in the Reserve, and he may have spent years surveying harbors in distant archipelagoes. All this will avail him nothing with the public, because the public sternly expects him to be an old sea-dog.

The psychological paradox is revealed in its most dramatic form when members of the public, as passengers, venture to go to sea. They have then before their physical eyes the men who carry on the work of the ship under the commander. They converse with these gentlemen, and it might be supposed that in the course of time a fairly accurate and realistic conception of sea-life would filter through to the consciousness of the public. Vain illusion! Seated in rows in their deck-chairs behind inch-thick plate-glass wind-shields, covered in cocoons of heavy rugs, and fed every two hours by attentive stewards, like so many larvæ in an entomological laboratory, these members of the public read sea-stories in magazines of sea-captains with tremendous lower jaws and fearful vocabularies, who are either drunken comic characters or bellicose imbeciles. Almost invariably these fictitious skippers have a beautiful blonde or (more rarely) a dangerous brunette on board. Sinister oriental stewards and gigantic firemen crazed with opium (supplied by the sinister oriental stewards) flit across pages illustrated in a vigorous manner by gentlemen who are convinced that all ships' officers carry revolvers even into the dining saloon.

When the captain walks among these readers of magazines they do not see a middle-aged professional man who is buying a house at Bay Ridge, or perhaps Glen Ridge, on time payments, and whose eldest daughter has just graduated from high school. Far from it. For them he suffers a sea-change into something rich and strange. He is for them a rollicking creature who ought for their delectation forget the training of a life-time in restraint and responsibility and suddenly dance a horn-pipe with a yo-heave-ho. He may be a life-long abstainer and a devoted husband. But his passengers know better. They attribute to him incredible adventures with wine, women and song in the South Seas, where he has quite probably never been in his life. Nothing he may do or say will have any effect upon this senseless romanticism of the public toward the sea. He must remain, not a fellow-citizen with a vote and an income-tax form, but an old sea-dog.

The Editors presume that the objection to The American Spectator on the ground that they are no longer young boys of thirty-five bursting with revolutionary ardor must constitute the Big New Note in American literary criticism.

SOPHISTICATION

by VAN WYCK BROOKS

Sophistication, in the current sense of the word, is a state of mind which consists in knowing too much while at the same time knowing too little—too much of the periphery of life, too little of the core and centre. It expresses itself in a language of insinuation, and is, for the rest, a sort of cosmetic equivalent of wisdom that is indeed terrifying to the uninitiated. Of all the ways in which the art of "putting it over" has manifested itself in America, this is surely the most tragic; for it prevents the instructed from really learning anything about life and meanwhile sets up a barrier between simple folk and those who ought to be the vehicles of knowledge. To what is this unhappy condition due? Partly to the extreme ingenuousness of the majority of our population, which gives rise to a constant temptation to impose upon them; partly to the rarity of those who are fully conscious, which tends to give these latter an excessive conceit of themselves, and too strong a sense of the importance of their "awareness"; and partly to the fact that those who are conscious owe their enlightenment too much to associations with Europe, which destroys their normal sense of obligation to their own people and fills them with a "light" so unrelated to their actual experience as to be a mere phosphorescence ("luminosity without combustion"). This has all happened before and elsewhere—in Russia, for example, where Dostoievsky was always trying to humble the intellectuals. It happens with every people that has failed to generate a conscious, characteristic spiritual life: the intellectuals seek their nourishment where they can, the result being that they are improperly nourished and despise their own flesh and blood as well.

The Editors ponder: Assuming that all laws and restrictions relating to permits, licenses, et cetera, and devised to govern and restrain mendicants, peddlers and seekers for charity, were to be strictly enforced, what would become of the circulations of the Ladies' Home Journal and The Saturday Evening Post?

THE VALUE OF NON-VIRTUE TO THE WOMAN ARTIST

by ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

The history of female virtue (or chastity, or continence, or what-you-will) is a long one, and sometimes amusing. But in our own time the matter has taken a turn too serious to be dismissed with a laugh. A form of competition has grown up that gravely threatens the livelihood of male artists. Briefly, the question is this: is it possible for men to compete successfully with women in the field of virtue? Can any male artist create for himself a reputation for sexual promiscuity that will be as valuable an asset to him as a similar reputation would be to a female artist? The answer is: no.

A bad moral reputation is such a priceless commodity for a female artist that a male artist is at a cruel disadvantage. I, as a male, am jealous of the invidious privileges of the other sex; and I want this thing stopped!

Let us approach the subject delicately and with discretion. A proper regard for female virtue and for the tender sensibilities of the sex is bound to cramp my style in this analysis; nevertheless, conscience drives me on to my civic duty in exposing the profound injustice which is my theme.

In the sadly real world, few people can indulge even a small number of their desires. Hence no spectacle, except a fire or a murder, is quite so thrilling to the public as the privilege of seeing, in the flesh, a "bad woman."

Let us, for example, take Miss. . . . But no! I refuse to add even one mite more to her meretricious reputation. You know, however, the lady I mean. She steals secretly across continents in special trains—with reporters warned to be at the station wherever the train stops; warships have to defend her privacy as she slips incognito into the harbor on a visit to her native land, where military bands are necessary to conceal her arrival from the populace and where, by some coincidence, her publicity agent has set up a battery of Klieg-lights that make Hollywood seem like the Black Hole of Calcutta in comparison. But all this interest in her shy personality is because she is known to be a "sleeper," not an actress. It is sleeping, not acting, that draws the crowd. A great artist, such as the late Nijinski, could sleep his head off if he wanted to, and who would care a damn? Whereas, on the contrary, the admirable Isadora's sleepfulness was of incalculable value to her reputation.

Hence with an angry and jealous growl, which all my male readers will echo, I conclude this demonstration of a hideous injustice. Men!—we can sin and sin and sin, and it gets us nowhere. But when women merely have a bastard or two, they become immortal. Look at Eve, look at Leda, look at Danæ, look at Europa, look at Margaret Fuller, look at Sarah Bernhardt! Is this fair? Is this equal suffrage?

Gentlemen, let us reassert our rights!

I ask you, is not a bad man just as bad as a bad woman?

Oh you heroes of a thousand battles, let us insist that we, too, are wicked!

THE NEW GRIEVANCE OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

by ERNEST BOYD

Russia once shared with Poland the proud distinction of having the most bestial record of cruelty to the Jews of any country in modern Europe. Today in Russia anti-Semitism is a crime. One might imagine that this fact would be more than gratifying to the Chosen People outside the U.S.S.R., but such is not the case. The New York *Herald-Tribune* made its contribution to the last Yom Kippur celebrations by printing the statement that "the most devastatingly effective pogrom in history is in full swing in Russia. Not the Jew but his Judaism is the victim." And on the same occasion Bernard Shaw was denounced by the learned rabbis for saying that "those Jews who still want to be the chosen race—chosen by the late Lord Balfour—can go to Palestine and stew in their own juice. The rest had better stop being Jews and start being human beings." Neither Shaw nor Stalin has any desire to encourage the Jews in their craving for martyrdom. In the eyes of the orthodox this is an unpardonable offense.

Yet, how long and how often has the world been obliged to listen to the often well-founded protests of Jews against the discrimination of which they are the victims? Those who have argued in their behalf, who have insisted that Jews be admitted or excluded on their merits as individuals and not on their defects as a race, appear to have been totally mistaken. The Jews, it now appears from their comments on Russia, object fiercely to being accepted, assimilated and received on a footing of complete equality with the other citizens of the countries to which they belong. They insist upon having their Semitic cake and eating it. A vast nostalgia for the swords of the Little Father's Cossacks and the lovely ghettos of Minsk, Kiev and Warsaw has seized upon the Chosen People, as they contemplate the horrors of their present position in Russia, where in proportion to their numbers they hold the major share of leadership.

This illogical desire to be identified with the community in which they live, while emphasizing everything in themselves which marks them off as different, is one for which the Jews can expect little sympathy from their intelligent friends. This year's tercentenary of Spinoza appropriately calls to mind Matthew Arnold's famous remark concerning the sentence of anathema pronounced upon Spinoza by the synagogue at Amsterdam. "They remained children of Israel, and he became a child of modern Europe." That, in a phrase, is the whole argument of those who deplore anti-Semitism. It was a brilliant Jew, Heinrich Heine, who eloquently denounced the horrors of Judaism as contrasted with the beauties of Hellenism. Perhaps the worst thing to be said of the Jews is that they are responsible for Christianity, for the spread of Judaistic ethics over the Western world. Otherwise, the worship of the Almighty would be restricted to the race that invented Him.

In Russia, Judaism is accorded the same treatment as other religions. The state withholds both its support and approval, but will permit people who are willing to pay for the luxury to worship as they wish. Deprived of financial assistance and unadvertised by pogroms, Judaism is dying for lack of cash customers. The younger generations are starting to be human beings, as Shaw puts it, and are succeeding remarkably well, by all accounts. Their brains and talents are needed and appreciated, as they are needed and appreciated wherever they are given a chance to display them. The calm assumption that a Jew ceases to be a Jew when he abandons Judaism is about as preposterous as it would be to assume that a German is not a German when he ceases to be a Lutheran, or that Bernard Shaw is not an Irishman because he does not go to Mass. It is obvious that the rabbis must defend their trade, and one no more expects from them an impartial judgment in this matter than from the clergy of other religions where their livelihood is at stake. But laymen ought to face the issue rationally. Do they or do they not desire that equality of treatment from Gentiles which enlightened tolerance demands for them?

If they wish to remain Children of Israel, then they need not be surprised if the world takes them at their word, and treats them accordingly. They should welcome ostracism and keep strictly to themselves. The safest place is the ghetto, of which such fond memories haunt the minds of Jewish leaders safely ensconced in Park Avenue and Central Park West, as they denounce the condition of their people in Russia today. Many strange accusations have been made against the Soviet government, but surely the strangest is that it is a crime to declare anti-Semitism a crime. Children are actually growing up in Russia who have never been called "sheenies."

This is clearly lamentable. Presumably it would be much better to import, say, John Howard Lawson's "Success Story," and show a snivelling, snarling beast as the personification of everything which good anti-Semites believe about the Jews. Jewish audiences, however, seem to relish this portrayal of themselves while protesting against the tolerance of Russia. This is undoubtedly an encouragement to the rabbis, whether reformed or orthodox. According to the arguments of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in the daily press, and of Rabbi Louis I. Newman in *The New Republic*, the best way of coping with the Jewish problem is to put a premium upon every difference which can arouse racial antagonism. Thus the Children of Israel can be again led into the Tsarist wilderness.

Is it the grievance of the Chosen People that the martyrdom racket is slowly but certainly being killed?

A DRAMATIST'S NOTEBOOK

by EUGENE O'NEILL

I advocate masks for stage crowds, mobs—wherever a sense of impersonal, collective mob psychology is wanted. This was one reason for such an extensive use of them in "Lazarus Laughed." In masking the crowds in that play, I was visualizing an effect that, intensified by dramatic lighting, would give an audience visually the sense of the Crowd, not as a random collection of individuals, but as a collective whole, an entity. When the Crowd speaks, I wanted an audience to hear the voice of Crowd mind, Crowd emotion, as one voice of a body composed of, but quite distinct from, its parts.

And, for more practical reasons, I wanted to preserve the different crowds of another time and country from the blighting, illusion-shattering recognitions by an audience of the supers on the stage. Have you ever seen a production of "Julius Caesar"? Did the Roman mob ever suggest to you anything more Roman than a gum-chewing Coney Island Mardi Gras or, in the case of a special all-star revival, a gathering of familiar-faced modern actors masquerading uncomfortably in togas? But with masks—and the proper intensive lighting—you would have been freed from these recognitions; you would have been able to imagine Roman mob; you would not even have recognized the Third Avenue and Brooklyn accents among the supers, so effectively does a mask change the quality of a voice.

It was interesting to watch, in the final rehearsals of "The Great God Brown," how after using their masks for a time the actors and actresses reacted to the demand made by the masks that their bodies become alive and expressive and participate in the drama. Usually it is only the actors' faces that participate. Their bodies remain bored spectators that have been dragged off to the theatre when they would have much preferred a quiet evening in the upholstered chair at home.

Meaning no carping disrespect to our actors, I have been exceedingly lucky in having had some exceptionately fine acting in the principal rôles in my plays, for which I am exceedingly grateful. Also some damned poor acting. But let that pass. Most of the poor acting occurred in the poor plays, and there I hold only myself responsible. In the main, wherever a part challenged the actors' or actresses' greatest possibilities, they have reacted to the challenge with a splendid creative energy and skill. Especially, and this is the point I want to make now, where the play took them away from the strictly realistic parts they were accustomed to playing. They always welcomed any opportunity that gave them new scope for their talents. So when I argue here for a non-realistic imaginative theatre I am hoping, not only for added scope for playwright and director and scenic designer, but also for a chance for the actor to develop his art beyond the narrow range to which our present theatre condemns it. Most important of all, from the standpoint of future American culture, I am hoping for added imaginative scope for the audience, a chance for a public I know is growing yearly more numerous and more hungry in its spiritual need to participate in imaginative interpretations of life rather than merely identify itself with faithful surface resemblances of living.

I harp on the word "imaginative"—and with intention! But what do I mean by an "imaginative" theatre—(where I hope for it, for example, in the sub-title of "Lazarus Laughed": "A Play for an Imaginative Theatre")? I mean the one true theatre, the age-old theatre, the theatre of the Greeks and Elizabethans, a theatre that could dare to boast—without committing a farcical sacrilege—that it is a legitimate descendant of the first theatre that sprang, by virtue of man's imaginative interpretation of life, out of his worship of Dionysus. I mean a theatre returned to its highest and sole significant function as a Temple where the religion of a poetical interpretation and symbolical celebration of life is communicated to human beings, starved in spirit by their soul-stifling daily struggle to exist as masks among the masks of living!

But I anticipate the actors' objection to masks: that they would extinguish their personalities and deprive them of their greatest asset in conveying emotion by facial expression. I claim, however, that masks would give them the opportunity for a totally new kind of acting, that they would learn many undeveloped possibilities of their art if they appeared, even if only for a season or two, in masked rôles. After all, masks did not extinguish the Greek actor, nor have they kept the acting of the East from being an art.

CATTAILS—NOVEMBER

by THEODORE DREISER

Beside a slowly darkening shore,
In icy water
Whose faint ripples ring them round.
Below a leaden, freezing sky,
Unbending.
Before a restless,
Bitter wind,
Erect
Crisp
Thin,
In snug brown coats
Waiting—
Yet shaking defiantly—
Against the inevitable decay of defiance,
These left-over spears of a faded Summer.
Whispering
In the approaching dark,
Whispering.

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CRITICAL SCHERZO

by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

A young man, suffering from an ambition to go to the theatre every night and thus accelerate what was already a recognizable case of incipient dementia, recently inquired of me what I regarded as the first rule for a dramatic critic to follow. "Never read dramatic criticism!" I told him. The reading of such criticism, I elaborated, having already driven most playwrights, actors, producers and critics crazy, would prove doubly dangerous in the instance of a young man like himself who showed signs of being crazy even before he began.

How anyone in any way connected with the theatre can read much of current dramatic criticism and retain his mental balance, I do not know. More than anything else, in point of fact, has the reading of other critics' criticism—even that of the more estimable—been responsible for the increasing derangement of dramatic critics themselves, so widely observable, and the increasing vertigo of their craft. The critic who reads criticism, like the bartender who drinks his own stuff, is doomed. To retain his legs and preserve the color of his nose, he must be a total abstainer.

To prove this to my young friend, I bade him go forth and fetch back with him a number of the first daily and monthly journals he could lay his hands on. Upon his return, I asked him to open the one on top and read what he found therein. It was an English gazette *(The Tatler)* and from the critical pages of Mr. James Agate, one of the ablest of the London dramatic critics, he read the following: "Ronald Mackenzie's 'Musical Chairs' is the best first play written in forty years. . . . Eugene O'Neill's 'Strange Interlude' is a colossal piece of pretentious bunk." "Do you happen to have seen those two plays?" I asked him. "Yes, sir," he answered, sufficiently.

The next journal was the New York *Sun* and from the pages of its dramatic critic, in a review of Rachel Crothers' "When Ladies Meet," my young friend read the following: "The women are understood, and set down, with a comprehension few among our playwrights are likely to equal. The men—well, it seems to us that Miss Crothers has once again come a cropper with one of her men, and that she weakens her last act—and psychologically her whole play—by it. She makes so poor a fish out of the man both women love that it is hard to imagine either of them loving him." "How," I asked my young friend, "if, as the critic insists, Miss Crothers understands and sets down women with a comprehension few among our playwrights are likely to equal, is it hard for the critic to imagine two of Miss Crothers' women characters loving the poor fish?" "I don't know, sir," he replied, sufficiently.

The next journal was *The Nation* and in the pages of its critic, the very intelligent and sagacious Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch, from a review of "Mademoiselle," my young friend read the following: "Its author, the Frenchman Jacques Deval, may be remembered as the man responsible for 'Her Cardboard Lover' . . . but the new play reveals him in the much softer mood appropriate to the slightly maudlin story of a frozen-faced governess." "Do you happen to know Jacques Deval's play as it was in France, before Miss Grace George adapted the ironic Deval into a 'softer mood' and his play into the 'slightly maudlin' story?" I asked my young friend. "Yes, sir," he answered, sufficiently.

The next journal was *The Bookman*. In its pages, my young friend read, from a critical article on the O'Neill drama by one Kemelman, the following: "I would merely point out that the tom-tom in 'The Emperor Jones,' although a new device, produced no change in the established technique of the drama. The use of the tom-tom is a trick whose only virtue is its novelty; it cannot be used again and it has not been used since." "As to the 'new device'," I inquired of my young friend, "do you recall a similar use of the tom-tom, years before, in Austin Strong's 'The Drums of Oude,' Conan Doyle's 'Fires of Fate,' and other such plays?" "Yes, sir, my father has spoken of it to me," he answered. "And as to 'it cannot be used again and it has not been used since'," I asked him, "have you yourself not seen any number of plays like 'Gold Braid,' 'Heat Wave,' *et al.*, to say nothing of such dramatic sound paraphrases as 'Distant Drums,' and to say nothing, of course, of a score or more of talking pictures?" "Yes, sir," he replied, sufficiently.

Turning again to *The Bookman*, my young friend read further: "In 'Strange Interlude' O'Neill uses another type of label, the aside. . . . In other words, the audience is treated to a series of explanatory notes on the emotions of the characters in the play. It is a confession on the part of the playwright that he cannot express himself in the dramatist's medium." "Wasn't it similarly a confession on the part of Shakespeare that he could not express himself in the dramatist's medium?" I asked my young friend. "Yes, sir," he answered.

The next journal was the New York *Herald-Tribune*, two copies of it. From a review of the Abbey Theatre Players' repertoire, in the pages of Mr. Watts, my young friend read the following: "As if in protest against the popular belief that their fellow countrymen are a merry and heedless people, given exclusively to whimsicality and high spirits, the Celt dramatists seem currently bent on dramatizing the essential melancholia of their race, on delving into the cruelty and intolerance they find in Irish life, on pillorying themselves for their sins and their follies. The modern Irish dramatist is as melancholy as Hamlet, as self-scourging as a pre-Bolshevik Russian." "Just what about any popular belief that the Irish are a merry and heedless people, given exclusively to whimsicality and high spirits?" I asked my young friend. "I don't seem to have heard of it, sir," he replied. "And are such modern estimable Celt dramatists as Brinsley Macnamara, George Shiels, Lady Gregory, George Birmingham, Lord Dunsany, George Fitzmaurice and Lennox Robinson bent ever on dramatizing the essential melancholia of their race, on delving into the cruelty and intolerance they find in Irish life, on pillorying themselves for their sins and their follies?" I continued. "I haven't noticed it," he answered.

Again my young friend turned to the same journal and from it read the following: "The Irish are generally thought of as a hyper-sensitive race, whose feelings are so easily injured that a play unflattering to their sensibilities will drive them into wild outbursts of indignation . . . yet the O'Casey tragedy ('Juno and the Paycock') scourges its people with savage intensity and assails the frailties of Gaelic character with merciless contempt. Whatever you may say about the Irish, they can certainly stand self-criticism in their theatre." "What about the merry hell the Irish have raised on a dozen recent occasions in Dublin—*e.g.* "The Plough and the Stars"—when plays unflattering to their sensibilities have been produced?" I asked my young friend.

He did not reply.

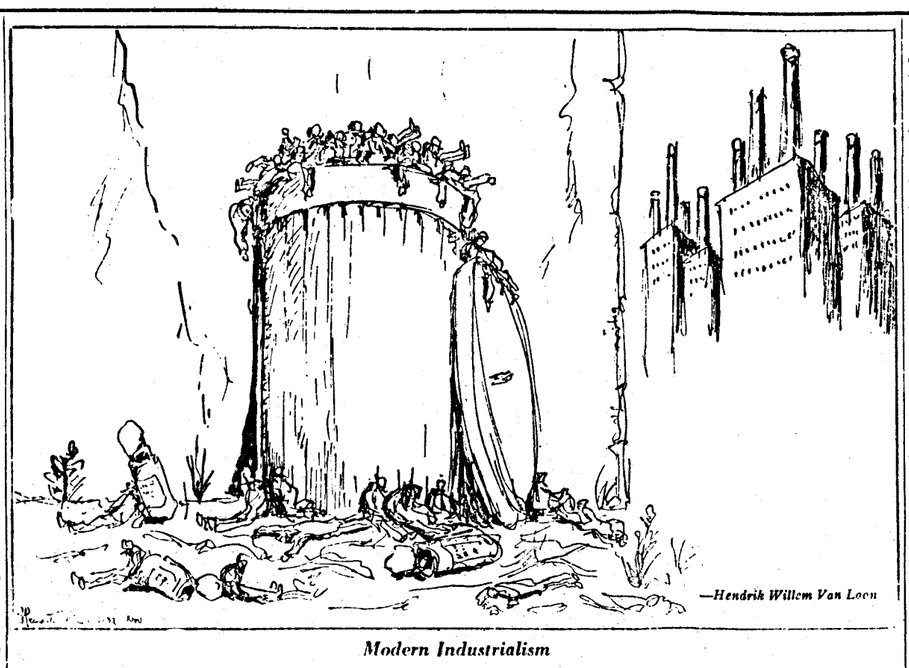
I looked around to see what had become of him.

He was standing on his head in the corner, loudly singing chop-sticks and proclaiming that he was Demetrius Phalereus or Lola Montez, he couldn't decide which.

"You're drunk. Where did you get that beer?" I asked, observing the foam on his mouth.

"That ain't beer," he answered. "And, by the way, wipe yours off."

Information Wanted: Scribner's Magazine, last seen in 1930. Regulation height and weight, yellow overcoat, substantial build. Present whereabouts unknown. Address Old Reader, P.O. Box 416. —Advt.



—Hendrik Willem Van Loon

Modern Industrialism

John Erskine

The Editors are informed on the highest authority:

1. That we are to cultivate the virtue of thrift and spend more.
2. That we are to cultivate the virtue of thrift and spend less.
3. That we are to stop hoarding and restore confidence.
4. That we are to avoid overindulgence and encourage thrift.
5. That we are to encourage rugged individualism and simplify our standard of living.
6. That we are to broaden our standard of living and encourage trade.
7. That we are to collect our foreign debts to the last penny and balance our budget.
8. That we are to forgive our foreign debts and so restore the world and ourselves to Prosperity.
9. That we are to have less of government in business.
10. That the government is to aid the railroads, banks, insurance companies and all business, and so have more government in business.
11. That we are to restrict immigration and so stop our over-production.
12. That we are to encourage immigration in order to increase the number of consumers.

SERVANTS OF GOD
No. 3

Associated Press Dispatch:

"I do not care what the world may say,
If your love for me is true;
I do not mind the toils of the day,
If I know at the dusk I'll see you."

Shortly after the Rev. S. A. Berrie, 51-year-old pioneer Presbyterian minister of Muskogee, Okla., indited this love poem to his pretty 19-year-old Sunday School teacher, he was arrested for the murder of his ageing wife.

PRETTY WAITER GIRLS

by HERBERT ASBURY

The lowest type of resort during the early days of San Francisco's Barbary Coast employed only a few women, never more than half a dozen. They were, invariably, aged and infirm wrecks, attractive only to men of peculiarly myopic vision. In varying stages of dishabille, they sat at tables, or on hard wooden benches placed against the walls, and acted as decoys. To each dive which offered dancing or entertainment, however, were attached from ten to fifty females, the number depending upon the popularity of the resort. Some were as young as twelve and fourteen years, while others were toothless old hags whose lives had been almost continuous saturnalias of vice and dissipation. At least ninety-nine per cent of them were harlots, even the children; and regardless of their youth or decrepitude, they were called pretty waiter girls. They wore gaudy costumes calculated to display or accentuate their charms, if any, and in some of the lower places a free-spending visitor who was dissatisfied with the degree of revealment was permitted, on payment of a small fee, which rarely exceeded fifty cents, to strip any girl he desired. Many of the younger, prettier girls were subjected to treatment of this sort every night, and sometimes several times a night.

During the early eighteen-seventies the manager of one of the Mexican fandango dens, which lined Broadway opposite the County jail, introduced an innovation in dress which he reasoned, and rightly, would enormously increase attendance at his resort. He clad his pretty waiter girls in short red jackets, black stockings, fancy garters, red slippers—and nothing else. From the viewpoint of the customer, this was probably the most successful costume ever worn on the Barbary Coast. It was abandoned after a few weeks, however, partly because the girls complained of the cold and dampness, and partly because such crowds visited the establishment that it was impossible to maintain even a semblance of order.

As regular wages the pretty waiter girls were paid from fifteen to twenty-five dollars a week. They also received a commission on the liquor they sold (usually twenty per cent.), half the proceeds of their own prostitution—if carried on during their hours of employment—and half the income from dancing, the price of which varied from ten to fifty cents. Occasionally a girl earned as much as fifty dollars a week, practically all of which she gave to her pimp, who promptly spent it on another woman, as has been the custom of his kind from time immoral. In the free melodeons, as well as in the concert saloons, the female performers were paid upon practically the same basis as the pretty waiter girls. Between their appearances upon the stage they were required to sell liquor, and, in most of the resorts, to give themselves to any men who desired them. Very few possessed any histrionic ability, and scarcely any could sing or dance. Sometimes, however, their lack of talent was so obvious that they were, unconsciously, very comical, and so were in great demand as entertainers.

In this category were six Barbary Coast *artistes* of the middle eighteen-seventies, who were widely known as the Galloping Cow, the Dancing Heifer, the Roaring Gimlet, the Waddling Duck, Lady Jane Grey, and the Little Lost Chicken. The Galloping Cow and the Dancing Heifer, two enormous women who had forsaken the washtub for a fling at high life in the melodeons and the concert saloons, were a sister act; they performed a classical dance, lumbering about the stage like a brace of elephants. The Roaring Gimlet was very tall and extraordinarily thin, but from her scrawny throat issued a voice that would have shamed the Bull of Bashan. Lady Jane Grey was a rather handsome, sad-faced woman of middle age, who was more than half-cracked on the subject of the nobility. She confided to everyone who would listen that she was the illegitimate daughter of an English Earl, and during her waking hours, on or off the stage, she wore a coronet fashioned from cardboard and embellished with bits of colored glass. The Waddling Duck was a singer, sinfully fat, who was advertised as the only female who could sing in two keys at one and the same time. As a matter of fact, she sang in none; she simply opened her mouth and screeched what she called scales, along which her voice bounded like a frightened mountain goat. She was, perhaps, the first crooner in San Francisco.

The Little Lost Chicken was a tiny girl in her middle twenties. She knew but one song, a ballad which began, "The boat lies high, the boat lies low; she lies high and dry on the Ohio." This she sang in a quavering falsetto, invariably bursting into tears at the last note. She so obviously required protection against the cruel blasts of the world that many gentlemen very chivalrously offered it; but always to their financial distress, for in her artless way the Little Lost Chicken was a first-rate thief and pickpocket. All of these women were very popular for a brief period, but none made any lasting impression on the Barbary Coast except the Galloping Cow. She saved her money, and, about 1878, opened a saloon on Pacific Street, in a large room shaped like a half-moon, with a balcony, in which were tables and benches.

On the day she opened her establishment the Galloping Cow announced that she had had enough of men during her career in the concert saloons and melodeons, and that anyone who tried to take advantage of the fact that she was a lone woman would rue the day he was born. Only one man ever violated her rule against flirtations. He chucked her under the chin one night when she served him a bottle of beer, and she promptly smashed the bottle over his head. Then she flung him over the balcony railing and broke his back. Next day a huge sign appeared above the bar:

NO BULLS WANTED.
THIS MEANS YOU!
(Signed) THE GALLOPING COW.

Most of the dance halls and concert saloons provided, in the building above their cellars or in a sub-cellar, a large room which had been partitioned into tiny, stall-like cubicles, furnished only with cots or pallets on the floor. Thither the pretty waiter girls and female performers repaired with the men who had succumbed to their blandishments. In a few of the lowest resorts, instead of the cubicles which provided at least a measure of privacy, the room upstairs contained only rows of cots placed side by side. To give the girls plenty of time in which to sell liquor and attend to their other duties, there was usually a fifteen or twenty minute interval between dances, while the acts presented on the stage were similarly spaced. Also, before a man visited the cubicles, or the rows of cots, he paid the manager of the resort, or the bartender, the seventy-five cents, or dollar, which was the standard price. He was likewise required, by custom, to purchase two drinks at the bar, one for himself and another for his partner. Usually the bartender made a great show of putting an aphrodisiac into the girl's glass, but in reality she was served cold tea at whiskey prices.

In none of the Barbary Coast dives of this early period—or, for that matter, of any other period—was a man's life or property safe. The first duty of the girl who served drinks to a visitor, or with whom he danced, was to determine if he possessed any considerable amount of money. If he did, the whole machinery of the place was set in motion to despoil him. So long as he spent freely and drank heavily, he was not molested, but if he once displayed an inclination to keep his pocketbook closed, or betrayed a restlessness which might presage departure, he was immediately drugged. The usual procedure was to invite him to have a few drinks at the expense of the house. If he drank beer, a pinch of snuff was dropped into it; if whiskey was his tipple, it was liberally dosed with juice of plug tobacco; if he chose a mixed drink, the bartender added a little sulphate of morphine. But if a man imbibed sparingly, and showed no interest in the women, experiments were made upon him with cantharides, or Spanish Fly, which in those days was highly esteemed as an aphrodisiac, and was much used throughout the Barbary Coast. Thereafter he was either very sick or so much putty in the pretty waiter girl's hands, and willingly turned his pockets inside out to obtain her favors. If the visitor survived the drugs and was of a particularly husky build and pugnacious disposition, he was allowed to depart. But as he made his way unsteadily through the narrow passage, which almost invariably was the only entrance to the den, he was knocked senseless with a hickory club. He was then robbed and rolled into the gutter.

Two handsome young girls attached to one of the Mexican fandango dives, neither of them more than twelve years old when they entered the resort, achieved considerable local renown during the late eighteen-sixties for the unvarying efficacy of their method of robbery. They always worked in cahoots, and it was their proud boast that no man had ever received from them what he had paid for. Selecting their victim, usually a sailor or a countryman, they inspired him with caresses and, if necessary, a drink flavored with cantharides, and then invited him to accompany them to one of the cubicles, generously offering to halve the customary fee. Having reached one of these tiny stalls he was invited to choose a partner. Without hesitation, and also without suspicion, he clasped one of the girls in his arms, whereupon the other cracked him on the head with a slung shot. They then emptied his pockets and summoned the bouncer, who rolled the unconscious form of the victim into the alley, while the murderous little *señoritas* divided their loot and returned to the dance floor, still their charming and vivacious selves.

"Booms and Depressions," by Irving Fisher, listed as last month's "Worst Book of the Month," was erroneously credited to Greenberg. It is published by the Adelphi Company.

THE REVIEWER'S IDOL

by EDWIN MUIR

Probably the most important recent event in English criticism has been the publication of Mrs. Q. D. Leavis' "Fiction and the Reading Public," though its real importance has not been given to it. Most writers and a fair proportion of intelligent readers already knew, no doubt, of certain or all of the abuses exposed in the book. The point is that these have now been publicly exposed with a complete disregard of literary vested interests, and this is bound to have at least some effect on the literary situation. People knew before that contemporary reviewing was dishonest, as well as cheap and inefficient, but they did not think very much about the matter. They regarded reviewing somewhat as they regarded the English House of Commons, that is, as an institution about which the most interesting things were, on the whole, its corruption and inefficiency. There is, besides, a certain satisfaction to one's vanity in knowing that an institution which enjoys the esteem or trust of a great part of the population is really rotten; the possession of inside knowledge, even when it is unsavory, as it generally is, being usually considered a mark of superiority. Well, Mrs. Leavis has made it extremely difficult for any of her readers to find the corruption and inefficiency of contemporary reviewing merely amusing.

The kinds of disingenuousness shown in current reviewing are countless, but it is the more subtle kinds that are the most harmful. We know where we are when someone writes of Mr. Gilbert Frankau's or Mr. Stephen McKenna's or Mr. Warwick Deeping's last brilliant novel. It is when we come to a class of writer definitely superior to these that everything becomes hopelessly confused. I am thinking of writers with a solid reputation, such as Mr. F. Brett Young, Mr. J. B. Priestley and Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, writers whose work is related to literature roughly as margarine is to butter. There are margarine eaters who actually prefer the substitute to the real thing. The professional reviewer is fed weekly on margarine or worse, whether he likes it or not. The result is that butter becomes actually distasteful to him; when he encounters butter, which is not very often, he fights shy of it, or fastidiously criticizes its flavor, which deviates unmistakably from that of genuine margarine. Present him with a representative supply of margarine, on the other hand, and he will display a sensibility and a discrimination which seem miraculous to the mere lover of literature. He will find in Mr. Brett Young's margarine, for instance, epic breadth or classic restraint, in Mr. Priestley's the sound romanticism and the comfortable unction of the best Victorian margarine, and so on. All this may have its amusing side, but it has one very serious drawback: that it creates the illusion that works of real literary importance are being discussed. When we read of some excellent piece of margarine that it is "rich in contrast and variety" or that it is "an extraordinary achievement and should fortify and enlarge the author's fame," we do not feel we are reading of margarine, but of literature.

It is margarine standards that have built up the figure who really represents literature to the English and American reading public today: what may be called the reviewer's idol. This figure is never more than a respectable substitute, never either hot or cold, never either a worshipper of God or of Mammon, though deferential to both, and generally smiled upon by the latter at least. Other qualities may be attributed to him: the tolerant temper which is produced by large sales and a comfortable income, but above all the quality that is generally called "humanity." Also he is never harsh, never forbidding, never difficult, never unpleasant. How completely the reviewer is devoted to him may be seen in the general treatment of writers who do not conform to the above requirements. A test case is that of D. H. Lawrence. His "obsession" with sex no doubt gave his critics a handle against him; yet the same critics had generally no fault to find on that score with the novels of Mr. Gilbert Frankau.

The reviewer's idol has grown by now, as Mrs. Leavis shows, to such dimensions that it shoulders off the stage any faint manifestation of the genuine or the new. In other words what is publicly and officially recognized as literature is not literature at all, but a substitute. The Germans have a special word for this: *Kitsch*. The ubiquity of *Kitsch* in England is forcing literature itself into a kind of hole and corner existence, and at the same time turning criticism into a private occupation, for the criticism one reads in most of the papers and reviews has the same relation to real criticism as political news has to the real truth about politics. The vast majority of present-day literary reputations, in other words, have the reality of news, and nothing more. When a reviewer writes of Mr. Priestley's "great new novel" he means no more by the words than a political correspondent when he reports Mr. Baldwin's "great new speech." The evil is that in the one case everybody accepts the epithet as the customary newspaper cliché, whereas in the other a great number of people are still ready to take it as a serious literary judgment.

Mrs. Leavis ends her book on a very desperate note, and the situation is undoubtedly desperate. The reviewer's idol seems to be more securely enthroned than any other secular power, even than money at present, though money very largely helped to plant it where it is. What hope is there of shaking it? Mrs. Leavis fixes her hope on a small organized minority, and that is certainly necessary. It is a faint hope; but I think there is also another: the growing public awareness that the reviewer's idol is only an idol. The public is becoming distrustful of official literary guidance. And so bad are things that that can only be looked upon as a good sign.

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BRITISH JOURNALISM

by WICKHAM STEED

The other day, in the height of the holiday season when most newspaper circulations drop, the editor of a respectable Sunday journal told me that his circulation was going steadily up, and asked if I could account for it. He agreed with some of my suggestions and then said, "We have been trying to find out and have at last come to believe that the main reason is the wish of a greater number of ordinary folk to read better papers than sensational rags that rely on stunts, crime, competitions and bathing girls; and that the reason for this reason is the effect of the constant broadcasting of good talks on serious subjects by the British Broadcasting Corporation. If we are right, it is a good sign."

"You are probably right," I answered. "If so, it goes to prove what I have long felt—that the British press is behind the times and does not know what the public really wants."

Nearly forty years ago there was a revolution in British journalism. Alfred Harmsworth began it. He saw that the spread of popular education through the County Council schools was creating a demand for reading matter which none of the dull, heavy, daily sheets was able to meet. He has often been accused of having lowered and degraded the public taste by demoralizing the British press with "American methods," and of making millions for himself by pandering to vulgarity. The truth is rather that his own mind was, at that time, the County Council school mind writ large; and that he understood two things which the publishers of older sheets did not see. Of these the first was that the County Council school mind covered a much wider area than snobs or highbrows imagine. The second was that there is nothing which most people are so mean about as the price they pay for a newspaper.

So, at a time when other papers cost six cents, four cents, or two cents at the very least, he produced his *Daily Mail* at one cent. Everybody, himself included, foretold his speedy ruin. So persistently did he circulate stories of his frightful losses that he had a long start of any possible rivals before they found that they had been fooled. The *Daily Mail* paid handsomely from its first issue.

In his own way he put "the news" into it, big news and little, bad news and good, true news and false—though he soon learned that false news is poor journalism. He threw away money in getting the news, and edited it so that the County Council school mind would see what it meant. Soon his *Daily Mail* was the favorite journal of the masses—and of "Society."

Before Harmsworth founded the *Daily Mail* in 1896 he had put his last penny into buying the *Evening News*, a Tory rag on which the Conservative Party was believed to have lost $2,500,000. With the exception of the old *Pall Mall Gazette* and its successor, the *Westminster Gazette* (with which may be bracketed well-written papers like the *Globe* and the *St. James's Gazette*), London evening journals were then, and still are, a by-word and a reproach. The *Evening News* was the worst of all. Its rival, the *Star*, was nearly as bad, despite its more Liberal hue. By an amusing prank which the late T. P. O'Connor never forgave or forgot, the bankrupt *Evening News* was sold to Harmsworth for $60,000. He and the man who brought it to him—one Kennedy Jones, who had been a foreman printer and was then the roughest of rough diamonds, cast about for means of making it pay. The strictest economy failed to close the gap between outgoings and incomings. Then Harmsworth had a brain wave. For a few months he had been a "soldier" in the Salvation Army, and had learned that there were other sides to the British man-in-the-street than those to be seen in gin palaces or among the hangers-on of race tipsters. The *Evening News* had been printing as many as eighteen columns of horse-racing copy every afternoon, and the *Star* no fewer than fourteen. Harmsworth cut the racing columns by fifty per cent and filled the space with better stuff. Circulation increased by leaps and bounds and—judiciously exploiting a sensational murder—he made a profit of $175,000 in the first year.

In the spring of 1921, shortly before the centenary of Napoleon's death, I asked Marshal Foch whether, in his opinion, Napoleon would have done better in the World War than he and the other Allied commanders had been able to do. He paused a moment and then said that it would have taken Napoleon two months to master modern military technique. Having mastered it, he would have found some new dodge and would have smashed the enemy overnight. Harmsworth, better known as Lord Northcliffe, liked to be called the "Napoleon of the Press." This peculiar vanity was one of his weakest points. But I feel sure that if any publisher of genius equal to his were to arise in British newspaperdom today, he would sense the new situation, understand that the noisiest and most blatant English journals lag far behind the real taste of the public, and would sweep the board with a type of popular journal which, in comparison with the *Daily Mail* of 1896, would be high-class without being highbrow.

Some of the staider papers are dimly aware of the change in the quality of public demand, though they have not the wit to perceive that the two canons of successful journalism remain what they have ever been: "Thou shalt not be dull" and "Thou shalt give the news." The nearest thing to a live newspaper of the popular sort in England today is Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*, but it is so much of a speaking-trumpet for Lord Beaverbrook himself, and so hampered by the limitations of his narrow-track mind, that it repels as many readers as it attracts. The so-called Labor organ, the *Daily Herald*, which runs the *Daily Express* close in point of circulation, is a mere business proposition run by hard-faced capitalists for the sake of auditor's certificates and advertisement revenue. There are more bathing girls, film stars, prize-fighters and racing tips in it than in any of its competitors. As an instrument of Labor doctrine it is not comparable to the old *Daily Herald*, which could not pay its way.

Until the death of the late C. P. Scott and the tragic drowning of his son and successor a few months back, the *Manchester Guardian* had been, technically speaking, easily the best of the serious English newspapers for nearly ten years. Of late there has been a marked decline in its editorial quality and power, though some of its news is first-rate. A sort of bewilderment has come over it. Like the London *Times*, it is still indispensable and is, on the whole—with the Tory *Morning Post*—the best written of English dailies.

And this brings me to the matter of writing. English journalistic style is in a bad way. It is infected by jargon. People do not begin to do things; they "commence." Nobody behaves well or ill; everybody has an "attitude." Events are "happenings", and may be "amazing", "arresting", "intriguing", or "gripping" according to the sub-editor's or the reporter's fancy. So far has the "attitude" nonsense gone that it is actually to be found in official documents. The Treaty between Great Britain and Iraq, for instance, pledges the High Contracting Parties to "maintain a friendly attitude" toward each other, not to behave as friends. "Schools of journalism" abound, but none of them seems to think it worth while to ground its pupils in Anglo-Saxon.

Worst of all, the English press has become "The Newspaper Industry." The shares of money-making newspaper combines are bought and sold in the public market, and the buyers naturally look for big dividends. Big dividends, in their turn, mean artificial circulations, got and kept by such devices as heavy insurance benefits for "registered readers," many of whom never look at the sheets they buy, and thus deprive advertisers of the publicity ostensibly guaranteed. The hunt for circulation or, at all events, for circulation certificates as leverage for advertisement revenue, goes on with growing intensity. And all the while editors and publishers forget that the one true path to big, steady, solid circulation lies through true news, sound views, independence of character and honest appeal to the higher feelings of an increasingly educated public.

Sooner or later something in this inflated "newspaper industry" will crack. Then, if a new and perhaps a wiser Harmsworth comes along with a nose for the new public, we may have a second revolution in English journalism. Meanwhile, no man can gather from the English press what the nation truly feels and thinks.

THE SUPREME COURT MENACE

(*Continued from Page* 1, *Col.* 2)

nullify legislation. James Madison sponsored such a provision, but his fellow law-makers voted him down four times in no uncertain terms. It was eventually agreed that no constitution giving the judiciary such unusual powers could ever secure ratification by the states.

As early as 1796 the Court began to think about extending its power, but majority opinions of that period are careful to repudiate the idea that the Court had authority to pass upon the validity of legislation. When Chief Justice Marshall eventually enunciated the principle that the courts might set aside acts of Congress on the ground that they were "repugnant to the Constitution," such a clamor of protest followed that the theory was not revived for years. Later pronouncements extending this right to acts of the states and other local bodies caused even greater agitation.

Eventually, taking advantage of the indifference of a moderately contented people, the Court accomplished what it had set out to do, and firmly entrenched itself behind a series of opinions arrogating to itself supreme and final authority over representative government. It has decreed itself arbiter over such economic issues as arise in cases involving valuation of utilities for regulation of rates, protection of patents, and other matters affecting property; and passing upon such issues the august judges of the Court continue to be, under their impressive robes, the same men, with the same prejudices, that they were when practising law as private citizens. Also, under the vague terms of the Constitution, it is impossible for members of the Court to decide such matters according to law. If they decide them at all, they must decide them according to their own notions of wisdom and expediency. Presidents and Senates, in creating judges, have frankly realized this inevitable truth.

Reform of the judicial branch by appointment to the Supreme Court of men aware of the need for making it responsive to present needs would provide the speediest method of securing flexibility, if a fortunate and improbable set of circumstances should provide us with a President willing to make such appointments, and at the same time should provide him with a sufficient number of vacancies on the Court. But such reform could only be transitory, dependent upon the political fortunes of the executive and the longevity and mental vitality of his appointees. In the end the conservative forces which constantly plot to dominate the government, and which usually succeed, would again secure control and drag us back to where we are today.

STUDY IN SINCERITY

by BRANCH CABELL

You have forwarded me, my dear madam, an advance copy of your forthcoming volume of fiction, with the suggestion that, if I "like the book," your publishers would be glad to have me write a few lines concerning it, to appear on the dust jacket. You have thus put me to the unpleasant necessity of saying I do not like your book. Your latest book appears to me to resemble each one of its predecessors in being a tedious and a meagre and a valueless performance, about which no civilized being could say anything kindly except by lying outright.

Hardly any other exercise in the unveracious could much trouble my indurated conscience, for I find that I lie daily to preserve my quiet, my solvency, my social position, and my domestic peace. Yet I cannot—it is an odd thing—lie about books with a mind wholly at ease.

That your most recent book should be refined, dependable, and dull reading-matter, appears to me rather an affair of necessity; and whether this particular book be much more insulse and humdrum than is the average book acclaimed by our more serious-minded readers, I am not qualified to declare. I know only that for years each one of your books, madam, has revealed, to my casual inspection, the sincere and ambitious and painstaking exercise of third-rate endowments: and I decline to figure, even on a dust jacket, as an admirer of that against which my auctorial life has been a protest.

I make bold to differ with the most of those who review your books. I have read duly their admiring remarks upon your delicately chiseled style, your serene nobility, your unerring choice of the right word, and all that other bleated balderdash which proves how acceptable among us as a substitute for authentic art is your sedate hebetude. It puzzles me sometimes, I confess, to note our intense admiration for the merely inadequate: it troubles me thus to be bidden to a banquet of Lucullus when the entertainment is really modeled after a tea-party among the ladies of Cranford.

Yet I do not, I hope, grudge you your success as a purveyor of sane and harmless and mildly edifying fiction. None can deny your somewhat muzzy admiration of the homelier virtues. One admits the whole-hearted sincerity which transfers to the pages of your books all the more tediously tender features of actual existence. One can charitably imagine that even the too long preserved virginity, whose staleness appears to permeate all your later books like a small smell, is not in the least your fault, but remains chargeable to the delinquencies of quite a number of men. All these things I, at any rate, concede you with an equable mind: and only when the merits of your prose style are held up for our adulation does my blood boil. Here, to be sure, I am a fanatic: and it is an ebullition, even then, far less of rage against you, madam, than of despair for my native land, which continues in this fashion to regard the third-rate with profound seriousness and respectful awe.

You must bear with me. I speak pettishly, no doubt: I have cause. You are to me an unfailing bother precisely because we both dote on the unmodish idea that writing is an art demanding in its execution almost as much constant painstaking as is needed by a cook in the kitchen or by a chauffeur in the driver's seat. I at least am so unimaginative, so uninspired by æsthetic fervors, as to believe that all words are in the dictionary, ready for anybody's taking, and that the best writer is simply he who extracts them with the greatest discretion and rearranges them most adroitly. That is why it bothers me, madam, to see all your patient labors result in volumes which I find wholly unreadable: it is an outcome which suggests my theories may be wrong, and no male can face any such suggestion calmly.

It seems to me, in brief, that your new book, and all your books in so far as I know them, are not for my reading. I would like to like them. Yet I most obstinately don't. I have tried my honest utmost to think otherwise. Time and again I have made a sortie into your writings, accompanied by hope and charity: faith, I admit, declines to be of our little party any longer. And always I fall back repulsed; always I find you invincibly dull.

Very blessed are the dull: they need not seek to inherit the earth; they already possess it. Very blessed are the dull in their peculiar felicity, that they cannot ever perceive their own dullness, nor ever be convinced of its existence. As well might a blind man be fancied to discover the sallowness of his own complexion. Thrice blessed are the dull in that they admire dullness with entire sincerity. Quadruply happy are the dull in that their numbers are strong and many.

Thus does it follow, madam, that the best-thought-of editors, and the best-thought-of reviewers, and the best-thought-of writers of every kind, must necessarily be dullards, without any of them ever suspecting it, for not out of policy and time-serving, and not, as heaven well knows, by taking thought, do they achieve preëminence, but solely by virtue of their innate large gifts for dullness. Such gifts, if a little cultivated through altruism and some earnestness of purpose, will enable the fatuous to admire one another with entire sincerity, and to be admired also, at a respectful remove, by the unliterary legions of book borrowers—who revere in their reading-matter, as in every other matter, dullness, with an entire sincerity.

I can for these reasons, my dear madam, think of no fit and kindly sentiments wherewith to adorn your dust jacket save only that epitaph, slightly altered, which Joe Gargery composed in "Great Expectations": "Whatsumever the failings on her part, Remember, reader, she were that good in her hart." This much I am willing to allow you: but only, be it understood, as an epitaph, in so far as I am concerned. Do not bother me any more.

THE EDITORS: AN APPRAISAL

by MATTHEW MARMOR

In a recent interview, the Editors of *The American Spectator* are quoted as having said that they would be very glad to publish an attack upon themselves by some intelligent person who does not like them. I unblushingly toss my hat into the ring

Doddering Dreiser, with his experiments in realism, blazed a path through the entangled wilderness of sentimentalism. He is to be congratulated for his courageous pioneer efforts, but now it becomes our sad duty to regard him as *ausgespielt*. Other men have come up to supplant him; men with the same evangelical zeal, men who possess clearer and more lucid styles, whose use of grammar and syntax is impeccable, and who do not bore us with constant repetitions. As a social historian Dreiser isn't so bad. He knows how to depict people and he has a capacity for observation. But merely to be a reporter is not enough. As a social critic he is a farm-hand. He has a one-sided, peasant point of view. Social criticism is vitiated when the critic is unable to see life from a detached position.

Nevertheless, Dreiser may be proud of his "Sister Carrie," which was the pioneer in the movement to gain recognition for sex as a permissible dominant theme in American literature; for his "Jennie Gerhardt" and for "An American Tragedy." But what has he shown since 1925? In the Fall of that year, his "Tragic America" appeared, in which he made his bow as an economist. Critics everywhere rejected his statistics as incorrect, denounced his observations as imbecile, and generally questioned the truth of his conclusions. If this book had been written now, I am sure *The American Spectator* would have, in all probability, selected it as "the worst book of the month."

James Branch Cabell, or Branch Cabell, as he now prefers to call himself, once placed himself on record as desiring "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings." Even his severest critics will admit that he has made good his boast. He is perhaps the best stylist of any of our American novelists, but to me his choice of subjects, although it is distinctly individual, is distinctly unfortunate. If Cabell wrote with the frank realism of Dreiser, if his work were permeated with Dreiser's fervor, and all in Cabell's own beautiful, smooth-flowing language, he would be on his way to recognition as America's greatest novelist. But no! He is devoted to style for its own sake; and the principal and petty action of his works takes place in that cheese-cloth medieval land of Poictesme, where all the women are eroticists and the men are not slow to take advantage of the fact.

Cabell started his career as a pure romanticist. He early secured a small, devoted following, but evidently felt that he was not receiving enough attention. Taking the easy way out, he followed the lead of the late D. H. Lawrence by writing "Jurgen," which, from every and any angle, is pure and unadulterated smut, no matter how subtly it is presented. Of course, it was immediately suppressed and, people being what they are, it became a best-seller and he won a wide reputation. Lawrence has been defended on the ground that he was poverty-stricken at the time and only wrote "Lady Chatterley's Lover" because he knew that it would be suppressed and would consequently bring him large royalties.

Cabell, however, hasn't even this flimsy excuse to bolster up his case. He was a Virginia gentleman in no such straits, and only his desire to gain recognition for himself could have inspired him to write "Jurgen." True, he deserved better fortune than was his before he had written "Jurgen," but the steps which he took to win it were not only unethical but inexcusable.

Cabell is out-dated in these hard days of realism. Although it is claimed that from pure romanticism his work is becoming more ironical, philosophic and symbolic, he is clearly a throw-back to the romantic nineties.

Eugene O'Neill, like Cabell, seems to me to be unfortunate in his choice of subjects. This is largely due, of course, to the roving life he has led, and to his unsympathetic environment. (One might expect a man who has been a sailor to write about sailors, Negroes and prostitutes.) That in itself would not be so bad, but O'Neill has acquired along with his varied experiences a philosophy of life that is narrow and bogusly pessimistic. His plays read like the case-book of a gabby pathologist or psychiatrist. His characters range from perverts to neurotics. In "Mourning Becomes Electra," he has taken advantage of the present craze for Freud to portray as lousy and degenerate a group of characters as it has ever been my misfortune to see on the stage.

I am surprised that so obscure a figure as Boyd has been included with such impressive names as Dreiser, Cabell, O'Neill and Nathan on the editorial board of *The American Spectator*. True, he has been responsible for some excellent translations of French and German authors and for some authoritative studies of Irish literature but, as a writer in his own right, he is an unknown quantity. I think I am safe in saying that nine out of ten people are unaware of the existence of Boyd, and while that may not speak well for the people, it speaks still worse for Boyd.

Nathan has long been interested in the theatre. Outside the theatre, however, he helped to found *The American Mercury* and he has also collaborated on "The American Credo" and other first-rate treatises. The majority of his own works have been reserved for the drama and among these are many excellent critiques on the qualities of an ideal critic. However, like other charlatans of his ilk, Nathan never practises what he preaches. Not only is he not consistent in his opinions but he is constantly injecting his own none-too-charming personality into his writings. He has committed the cardinal sin, in my eyes, of arbitrarily setting himself up as the ruling god of the theatre for such persons as may read his reviews religiously. He evidently thinks that the sound critic is the one who "razzes" the most plays every year and that constructive criticism is a sign of weakness on the part of the critic. He claims, in short, to be a critic when in reality he is a satirist. Among Nathan's other affectations is the employment of a vocabulary of rare and obsolete words to impress the morons.

To sum up: who, after all, are these men who have set themselves up as editors of *The American Spectator?* Dreiser is *ausgespielt*, Cabell is an out-dated romanticist, O'Neill is a portrayer of perversion, Boyd is an unknown critic, and Nathan is a poseur.

THE RISE OF RASSLING

by BURTON RASCOE

I learn from the sports pages of the newspapers that there has been a revival of public interest in the noble art of rassling.

It seems that since Dempsey lost and Tunney abdicated the throne of pugilism, all of the contenders are just so many palookas with glass jaws and belt lines up under the arm-pits; and the public has lost interest in them.

As Reuben Lucius Goldberg once pointed out in a noble essay, the fight fans pay out their money, not to watch a couple of male adagio dancers or two fellows playing tag-you-are-it, but to see one fellow plant such an effective swat on the button that the possessor thereof has to be carried out of the ring on a stretcher.

Mr. Goldberg made his point in a plea to the intellectuals that they leave one form of entertainment free for enjoyment by the rough-neck. For a time many of the writers on æsthetics had glorified in terms of art such endeavors as high-diving, tight-rope walking, trapeze-swinging, juggling and sleight-of-hand. They found esoteric significance in the "Biff!", "Bam!", "Pow!" of the comic strips; they spoke of the custard pie throwing of the movie comics as if it were comparable to composing a symphony. Mr. Goldberg saw them closing in on pugilism when George Bernard Shaw picked Carpentier to win over Dempsey because of Gorgeous Georges' superior mental equipment and æsthetic appeal. Mr. Goldberg, as an embattled low-brow, thought it time to call a halt, because Mr. Dempsey took pity on the Gorgeous One and allowed him to go nearly two rounds.

Meanwhile, it seems, too much art has developed in the prize ring and not enough knock-outs. Mr. Tommy Loughran, it is admitted, is a very pretty boxer, agile, graceful, rhythmical in his movements and expert in technique, but he hasn't got the punch. Mr. Young Stribling can do the old-time Bunny-hug expertly; Mr. Primo Carnera would do very well as an attraction in a side-show; Mr. Jack Sharkey, who can't see so good when he is fighting, might do all right in the talkies; but none of them is a first-class pug.

And meanwhile something has happened to the rassling game. They've cleaned it up. At least that is what I hear and the public seems to believe it, for they are deserting the fights in droves and crowding in at the matches between Neanderthaler men who butt the wind out of each other by diving head-first into the stomach, make blood vessels stand out like rubber hose by squeezing the neck in strangle holds and bounce each other around like garbage men with an ash-can. They go in for eye-gouging and manslaughter.

Which is just what fight fans want. The rassiers are getting back to the grim earnestness of competition when Frank Gotch could wrest an eyeball from its socket in his determination to put his opponent three points on the mat. Let these behemoths with unpronounceable names tear a few eyeballs out, wring off some ears and pull some arms out of joint and the fight fans will forget about boxing altogether and fill Soldiers' Field for a rassling match.

As for me, outrageous as it may seem to a fight fan, I'd rather watch a *fixed* rassling match than one on the level. I've got a neurotic stomach or something. I don't like to see blood spurting from a dozen places in the chopped meat countenance of a Mr. Tiger Flowers, nor do I like to see a face writhing in terrible agony because someone is twisting a man's arm off.

As a reporter in the old days I used to cover minor rassling bouts. They all were fixed, and they were grand. They gave the spectators a good show for the money. The rasslers went through the most elaborate acrobatics, standing one another on the head, imitating Pavlowa and Mordkin, hurtling one another through space like Japanese tumblers and playing wheelbarrow around on the mat. Usually they had rehearsed their act before going on and they always looked as though they were in mortal terror of forgetting their routine and hurting each other. They were pathetically eager to please. I liked them.

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